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The Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba



TREASURES OF OUR LIBRARY

BY

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Treasures of Our Library

At the public annual meeting (Feb. 9th, 1901) of the Historical Society of Manitoba the following interesting paper was presented by Rev. Dr. Bryce, a life member and one of the first officers of the Society, on the "Book Treasures of the Historical Society Library."

During this month of February occurs the semi-jubilee of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba. The first meeting for the organization of the Society was held in the Court House, Winnipeg, on the 23rd of January, 1879. On the 22nd of February following that date the constitution was adopted and the first board of officers and managers was elected. We are impressed by the fact, as we read the names of that board, that the grim reaper has been very busy during the twenty-five years that have passed.

The following made up the first Board of Officers :

President—Hon. Chief Justice Wood.

First Vice-President—James Cowan, M.D.

Second Vice-President—Alex. McArthur, Esq.

Corresponding Secretary—Rev. Prof. Bryce.

Recording Secretary—Mr. Alex. Begg.

Treasurer—Mr. S. R. Parsons.

Executive Council—Rev. Canon Grisdale, Donald Codd, Esq., Mr. A. H. Whitcher, Mr. James H. Rowan, Mr. E. W. Jarvis, John F. Bain, Esq., Mr. James Stewart, Hon. John Norquay, Hon. Joseph Royal.

Of these fifteen, nine, so far as known to the writer, have passed away. The survivors are Bishop Grisdale, Judge Bain, A. H. Whitcher (Ottawa), S. B. Parsons (Toronto), and the writer.

The Society commenced its work vigorously, and immediately obtained suitable rooms in the Radiger block, near the present site of the Confederation Life building, 467 Main St. During the first year the Society secured a grant of \$200 from the Legislature, which sum, with a small increase, it has received yearly ever since. With a similar amount received from fees, the Society at once entered upon the work of founding a library. The history of this library is the subject now before us.

The writer well remembers the purchase of the first bookcase. It was to be something better than ordinary. Made of unstained oak, it was to be increased section by section as new cases were needed. It still serves the purpose of its origination in the Society's library, but it is alone in its grandeur, all of its succeeding adjuncts being made of humble pine.



THE FIDLER LIBRARY.

The first contribution to the Historical Society library was 350 volumes from the Hudson's Bay Company. A part of this was books from the Fidler library, which has its own history. Peter Fidler was a noted surveyor and fur trade officer, going back to 1791, twenty years before Lord Selkirk's time. Dying in 1822 he left 500 books of his library for a library nucleus on Red River. The books were taken to Fort Garry and a number of them, marked with the characteristic autograph of the quaint old trader, are in our possession. Of this gift a still larger number belonged to the "Military library." These speak of the presence in Fort Garry in 1846-8 of H. M. 6th Regiment of Foot, under the command of Col. Crofton, who

acted as Governor. Their library, left in Fort Garry, was well selected, as the books in our hands show. A few books of this first instalment belonged to the Red River library formed several years afterwards. This library was divided into two parts; the one being kept in the neighborhood of St. John's was chiefly absorbed by the first provincial library in 1870, but it was unfortunately burnt Dec. 3, 1873, along with the Parliament Building, which stood near the site of the Bank of Hamilton, Main Street. The other half of the library remained near Lower Fort Garry, and of this a few books were secured and are in our possession. Two record books of the Red River library came into the hands of the Society a year ago, and are in the archives.

THE PROVENCHER ADDITION.

To the Society's library, public libraries of Canada and the United States, and the various governments, on application being made to them, immediately began to pour in books, reports and documents. Besides this, the policy of the Society was always to have a little money ahead. In this way valuable collections of books were secured at a low cost. The first important addition of this kind was a well-selected collection of early Canadian books, the property of Mr. J. A. N. Provencher, a man of considerable literary ability, who was the first Dominion Indian Agent in Winnipeg. Wishing to realize on his books Mr. Provencher made a most favorable offer to the Society, which was accepted. This list of rare books is too long to be given. A beautiful six-volume edition of Pere Charlevoix' Travels was included; also twelve huge quarto volumes of the Documentary History of New York—a most valuable set; likewise a battered but interesting copy of Alexander Mackenzie's (1801) voyages. In the library beside this volume, though obtained later, stands a three volume edition of a translation of Mackenzie's work, printed (1802) in French in Paris. This is of great value. It was published for Na-

poleon, who actually projected a rear attack on Canada and Rupert's Land by way of Behring's Straits and the Mackenzie River. This set is a rare memorial.

THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

Everything which the young Society undertook seemed to prosper. One of the oldest friends of Rupert's Land was the great Smithsonian Institution at Washington. Hon. Donald

Red River Library

This Volume is Valued at 7s. 6d.

RED RIVER LIBRARY LABEL.

Gunn, a pioneer living near Lower Fort Garry, had made meteorological observations, and collections in natural history for the Smithsonian. Hudson's Bay Company officers had secured bird's eggs, skins of mammals and many other objects for the Washington Institution. Now came the opportunity for reciprocity. The Smithsonian at once responded and has never lost its interest in the Historical Society. Nearly all of its magnificent volumes of Ethnology, Archaeology, and Linguistics have been showered upon the Society. In the cramped and insufficient quarters in the City Hall they stand to-day, numbering no less than five hundred quarto volumes, an immense storehouse of most interesting information.

THE U. S. BOOKS.

Another good friend of the Historical Society was the late Consul Taylor. His portrait is in the corridor of the City Hall. He was everybody's friend; but to none had he a warmer feel-

ing than to the Historical Society. As Consul he was successful in having us placed on the list of favored recipients of the works issued by the United States' government. It used to be said that what the European nations spent on military equipment the United States spends on its publishing bureau. A vast collection of useful material has thus been gathered in these twenty-five years, now in excellent condition, though largely hidden away for lack of space, in Geology, Agriculture, Census, Education, Commerce, Statistics, Army Engineering, etc. No one knows the treasures of this department, numbering no less than sixteen hundred volumes and an infinite number of valuable pamphlets and brochures issued by the government. Within the last few weeks a purchase has been made of eight large volumes of "Messages and Papers of the Presidents, from George Washington down to President Garfield." The later issues will be added as printed. This set belongs to the Public Library side.

GREAT HITS.

During these twenty-five years the Society, with watchful eye, has secured great bargains. Judge Archer Martin, of Victoria, B.C., had expensive tastes in book buying. He collected a very complete set of "Selkirk Papers," *i.e.*, books, etc., relating to Lord Selkirk's early settlement of the colony of Red River. Mr. Martin was an enthusiast on this subject. On leaving Winnipeg Mr. Martin, being a warm friend of the Society, surrendered to it his valuable collection for a very moderate sum.

By careful scrutiny of the hundreds of catalogues received from dealers in Americana and Canadiana in London, Bristol, Edinburgh, Paris, Berlin, New York, San Francisco, Cincinnati and elsewhere, useful selections have continually been made of books within the scope of the Society's work. A magnificent set of six volumes, large quarto averaging 600 pages a volume, of Schoolcraft's archives of Aboriginal knowledge

was thus obtained. Its author was long Indian Agent at Sault Ste. Marie, and his ponderous tomes gave Longfellow the Algonquin legends which appear in *Hiawatha*.

Another collection, a perfect library in itself, is the work of H. H. Bancroft, a relative of the historian. This set is large quarto, sheep bound, forty-one volumes averaging 800 pages a volume, of information as to Canada and Western America, relating to native races of the West Coast, Central America, Mexico, New Mexico, Texas and Arizona, Alaska, Missouri, California, Northwest Coast (Canada), Nevada, Utah, Oregon and British Columbia. This amazing collection of upwards of 31,000 large pages was secured at a reasonable cost. The most notable "find" in the library is a bound set of "Punch," from the beginning (1841) complete up to a recent date, valued at \$250, which was secured for one-fifth of that sum. In this way the limited sums at the command of the Society have been used to great advantage.

GENEROUS PEOPLE.

It was a daring enterprise of the Society in the second year of its history (1881) to undertake to raise money for opening a public library for the benefit of the citizens. We find that \$2,000 was in that year obtained by subscription from citizens and that the City Council gave \$500 to the Society for this public benefit. No less than 2,500 volumes were taken out by readers in the first year. This was the beginning of the City Public library.

At this time was begun also another important branch of the work of the Society. The aim was made to publish every year four or five papers of value, and to make these representative of the work done. Up to date these publications, called transactions, have reached the number of sixty-three. Every year these transactions are sent to all the newspapers published west of Lake Superior, and these journals respond by sending

their papers regularly to the reading room of the Society. The sixty-five transactions represent a great deal of valuable research and have placed in permanent form stores of information which would have otherwise been lost to the country. On the other hand several tons of newspapers are stored away in the attic rooms of the City Hall. In St. Paul the Historical Society, which has rooms in the Capitol, binds up all the papers of the State of Minnesota. The time may come when our Society will do this. The Society was gratified at receiving last year from the proprietors of the Free Press a complete set of twenty-two years' well bound volumes of that paper, valued at \$200. This will be a complete and indispensable aid for the future historian of the City of Winnipeg.

CANADIANA.

One of the most interesting departments in which the Society has aimed at completeness is in books published in Canada or bearing on Canada. The library committee has a standing authority to purchase any book of value published in Canada. Sets ranging from Rattray's *Scot in Canada* to the *Canadian Cyclopædia*, books of travel in large numbers, and Royal Society transactions are here; so, too, the travels of Alex. Ross, Harman, Keating, Ross Cox, Franchere and the early explorers; and the splendid editions of Lewis and Clark (4 volumes), Zebulon M. Pike (3 volumes), *Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri*. These, all edited by the late Capt. Coues, make up a series of profound interest relating to the border life of Canada. Four hundred volumes of Canadian life, travel, history and adventure, it is safe to say, are on the shelves of the library.

ARCTIC LITERATURE.

Britain has ever been the promoter of Arctic exploration and the Northwest Passage. An enormous literature has grown

up in connection with Arctic discovery, and this the Society has aimed at obtaining. Hall and Kane, Ross and Franklin, Petitot and Young, Simpson and Kennedy, and many others, speak of the frozen north, and tell of British energy and endurance. Works on the Hudson's Bay Company, with its wonderful history, are here in large numbers. Warburton and Tyrrell, from the barren regions of the north country, tell their tale, and Ballantyne and Phillips-Wolley are here in their sketches, while a considerable Alaska literature is made accessible.

BOUNDED PAMPHLETS AND MAPS.

Canadian, and especially Western Canadian, pamphlets accumulate in great numbers in a library. Trivial and unimportant as many of them may seem, they form the very basis of true history, for they are not consciously historical. A year or two ago the Society spent a considerable amount of money in binding up pamphlets, and these now constitute two long shelf-rows of fat volumes. Valuable maps and manuscripts are hidden away in the Society's archives, that but need to have good quarters to be of great service to those searching for early information.

GREAT SETS.

In seeking to keep in touch with all literature bearing specially on Canadian life, the Society has taken in many series that publish a volume or two a year, but extend over five or ten years. Among these was the valuable reprint of twelve volumes (in 9) of Hakluyt's Voyages to America, a rare work, of which the original is valued at £80. Old Hakluyt was of Queen Elizabeth's time, and was Prebendary of Westminster. For our purpose the reprint is as valuable as the original. The Society is a subscriber to Murray's great dictionary, which publishes a volume every two years. Four volumes have now reached to the letter K. It is promised that of new quotations and extracts there will be one million

in the complete set. The reprint of the Gentleman's Magazine, with its treasures of archaeology, folk-lore, early customs, and quaint knowledge, came for years with unwearied regularity, till it reached twenty-five volumes of 350 pages each. The Society began to think that, like Tennyson's brook, it would "go on forever." It is now completed. The all-embracing Dictionary of National Biography is here, with its sixty-three volumes of upwards of 350 pages in each. There is a pathetic interest gathering around it, in the editor, Leslie Stephens, editing the volumes up to XXI; then in his having Sidney Lee as helper in XXII to XXVI; and on his withdrawal in Sidney Lee finishing volumes XXVII to LXIII. The whole is a stupendous work. The Society is a subscriber to the very select Prince Society of Boston, and has been permitted to obtain a number of its rare and valuable productions. Morang's de luxe edition of Parkman is here with its seventeen volumes, and here the two volumes are found to have been received of the great "Makers of Canada" series of twenty-four volumes by the same publisher. The library of thirty volumes of the World's Best Literature is available to readers, and with it four beautiful portfolios of illustrations of art and writing as seen in the British museum. Vieing in extent with the Dictionary of National Biography is the now complete reprint of the "Jesuit Relations." The Provencher library brought to the Society the original three volumes of the "Relations," published in Quebec, but it was reserved for Mr. R. G. Thwaits, of the Wisconsin Historical Society, to bring out (1896-1900) the sixty-nine volumes of the "Jesuit Relations." It is a work of great historic value.

SCIENCE.

Not less important for scientific purposes is the collection of the material for scientific research found in the Society's library. In addition to the Smithsonian Institution and United States works, the complete sets of the Royal Society of Canada's works and those of the British Association are in the

possession of the Society. The whole series of publications of the Geological Survey of Canada are here, even the uncommon 1853 report. The valuable eight-volume set of New York geology, on which the Canadian geological nomenclature is largely based, and the geological reports of Ohio and other states are readily accessible. Bailey's Cyclopædia (4 volumes) of Horticulture, and thirteen volumes of Ontario's Agriculture represent recent scientific work, while a number of volumes of philosophical transactions (1732-44), marked with the famous name of Peter Fidler, give us a taste of science a century and three-quarters ago.



THE PROSPECT FOR REFERENCE.

At present the library is available for reference, under the arrangement with the City, to the whole body of citizens. It is consulted for many things. The totally insufficient accommodation has resulted from the constant encroachment of the city offices. There is no possibility in its present quarters of the library being fully utilized.

It is hoped that the new Carnegie library will give relief and afford room and scope. It is also to be hoped that the City will arrange with the Historical Society for taking over this valuable library. Rare books of reference are scarce even now in London and Paris, and have trebled in value in the last fifteen years. To begin anew to collect the treasures now in possession would be a tedious and expensive task. The accumulations of the twenty-five years are as follows :

Historical Society	6,000 volumes
Sets of Exchanges	2,000 volumes
City library—bound books.....	7,000 volumes
Pamphlets, magazines, etc.	4,000 volumes
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Total	19,000 volumes

This will be a basis by no means insignificant with which to begin the Carnegie library.